United Nations

Centre against Apartheid

Notes and Documents

No. 1/93

February 1993

CHAIRMAN OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID OUTLINES 1993 PROGRAMME OF WORK

Statement by H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria)
upon re-election on 2 February 1993

93-77955

All material in these Notes and Documents may be freely reprinted.
Acknowledgement, together with a copy of the publication containing the reprint, would be appreciated.
United Nations, New York 10017

At the outset, I wish to express gratitude to the members of the Special Committee against Apartheid for the trust and confidence reposed in my country, Nigeria, as well as myself personally for re-electing me to chair this Committee at this very important stage of its existence. South Africa is in its so-called last mile in the long journey towards political settlement of the tragic conflict which has divided her peoples for so long. But that last mile is proving to be complex, circuitous and often very painful. It is therefore vital, particularly at this time, for the international community not to slacken its resolve but further strengthen its commitment to ensure that all South Africans truly share in the fruits of a new and just society.

At the beginning of each year, the Special Committee against Apartheid makes an assessment of developments in South Africa, outlines its strategy for months to come and presents its programme of work. The general guidelines for the Special Committee's future activities were provided by the General Assembly in December 1992, particularly in its consensus resolutions. These were based on and reflected in the Special Committee's report to the General Assembly (A/47/22). We also consider the latest report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the question of South Africa (S/25004) to contain useful guidelines and parameters for our future activities in support of the process of peaceful settlement in that country.

The failure of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa in May 1992 was followed by intensified waves of violence and high political tension. This together with an aggravating economic situation, especially high unemployment, threatened to bring the country to the edge of civil war. Realizing that any further delay in bringing about a political settlement could be disastrous, political leaders in South Africa started a series of bilateral talks at the end of 1992 and the beginning of this year, bringing fresh hope for the multi-party negotiations to resume within a couple of weeks from now.

It will be recalled that the Boipatong massacre shocked the international community and highlighted the necessity of its urgent involvement in assisting to contain and bring the violence to an end. The timely decision by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth and the European Community to send envoys and observers has also helped to defuse the political tension and promote an improved environment for the negotiation process.

The Special Committee has, over the years, played a leading role in mobilizing international opinion against apartheid. As the process of dismantling apartheid is now evolving, we can take pride in our achievements in the past. The debate and pattern of voting

on resolutions during the latest session of the General Assembly demonstrated that in a changing situation, we continue to be in tune with developments in South Africa, and that our focus, at this stage, on supporting the vital but precarious process of peaceful change, is understood and supported by the whole international community. The Special Committee has been able, perhaps contrary to some expectations, to adjust its activities so as to be relevant to the evolving situation in South Africa and this was reflected in the fact that, for the first time, the resolution on the programme of work of the Special Committee was adopted by consensus during the last General Assembly.

This year, with the establishment of a transitional authority/government, South Africa hopefully will enter a qualitatively new stage on the road to a fully constitutional non-racial and democratic society - a phase of joint responsibilities for government which would lead to the first full and free elections, which in its turn would determine the shape of South Africa for decades to come. That will be a crucial turning point in the country's history. Taking into consideration the ongoing process of negotiations and the latest developments in the country, it may not be unrealistic to hope that by 1994, agreements would have been reached on transitional arrangements to be in place for elections for a constituent assembly and for the establishment of an interim government of national unity. A main objective of the work of the Special Committee in 1993 is to encourage and support all those who participate with good faith in this political process, which will lead to the elimination of apartheid and equality for all its citizens under a new constitution.

Reflecting its desire to encourage and support the elimination of apartheid through a process of peacefully negotiated change, the Special Committee work programme for 1993 includes a mission to South Africa for contact and consultations with as many as possible of the parties involved in order to be informed directly by leading representatives of the various sides participating in the negotiation process of their views, assessments and hopes for a new South Africa. As a political body of the General Assembly and operating under a consensus mandate from it, our mission is distinct from the United Nations Observer Mission (UNOMSA) set up by the Secretary-General under a mandate from the Security Council. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that, supporting the same goals, our mission does not intend to trespass in the area of continuing functions and responsibilities entrusted to UNOMSA and so ably carried out by its dedicated leader and staff.

Also in this context, I would like to reiterate that a priority of the Special Committee remains to support the process of peaceful transformation of South Africa into a united, non-racial and democratic state and to promote assistance to the disadvantaged

/...

READEX
FICHE

sectors of the South African society.

In order to do its part in facilitating a peaceful and stable transition in South Africa, the Special Committee will seek to promote international assistance in helping South Africans to overcome the social and economic disparities resulting from the policies of apartheid. A seminar organized by the Special Committee at Windhoek in May 1992 was the first successful attempt to bring together South African researchers and future policy-makers, and senior representatives of various agencies of the United Nations system to discuss South Africa's socio-economic problems and the future role of the United Nations system in addressing those problems.

The General Assembly, in its resolution A/47/116B, commended the Special Committee for holding of that seminar and authorized it to follow up on the seminar through sectoral seminars on well-defined and specific topics. In 1993, the Special Committee is planning to organize a seminar on economic growth and sustainable social development in South Africa. It is hoped that the Committee will possibly do this in cooperation with the World Bank, the United Nations Centre for Transnational Corporations and other agencies and institutions.

In the not too distant future, the United Nations may be called upon to provide assistance in the context of elections in South Africa - the first fully democratic elections ever to be held there. The Special Committee considers that a seminar on the role and function of the United Nations electoral monitoring would be helpful in this respect, and such a seminar is included in its work programme.

The present violence in South Africa is not a promising ground for a fledgling democracy to take root and flourish. A climate of political tolerance and the promotion of democratic values are important for the citizens to be able to exercise freely their hard-won right to vote. To contribute to fostering such a climate, the Special Committee has also included a symposium on political tolerance in a pluralistic democracy in its work programme.

One more area of concern, in which the United Nations can provide expertise and assistance, is that of the protection and promotion of human rights. The Special Committee is planning to hold a seminar on the promotion of a culture of human rights, the role of law enforcement, of ombudsman and other mechanisms of remedy, and of community training. We hope to be able to enlist also the support of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in this endeavour.

The role that the anti-apartheid movements and non-

/...

governmental organizations around the world have played cannot be over-emphasized. The energy they have generated, as well as their accomplishment, have had a tremendous impact on the conscience of freedom-loving people and have had a decisive influence in policies of governments. Their support also remains vital in the transition period. Their energy and commitment will be needed in the reconstruction of South Africa. We are planning to bring together the European and American NGOs later this year to discuss how they envisage renewing their role and how they can contribute to the assistance needed by the disadvantaged sectors of South Africa during the transition period. The Special Committee will also continue to give concrete support to the anti-apartheid movements all over the world.

The Secretary-General in his report, which I have mentioned already, urges that special attention be given to the crucial role South African women can play in maintaining cohesion and stability. In order to show solidarity with South African women and to assist them in their quest for full and equal participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their country, the Special Committee is planning for an eminent women's support mission to South Africa later this year.

I have just mentioned our main activities during this year. Certainly, as Chairman of the Special Committee, I shall continue to consult thoroughly with all those concerned. I am sure that I can continue to count on the invaluable support I have always received from all the members of the Special Committee, from other member States of the United Nations and, of course, from the Secretary-General and the United Nations Secretariat, in particular from the Centre against Apartheid. I do realize the considerable staff constraints under which the Centre is working today. I would like to express our gratitude to the remaining staff members for their dedicated work to implement the increasing load of activities that we entrust to them.

Finally, I would like to emphasize once again that the positive but fragile process in South Africa deserves the continued support of the international community. This is the year of momentous decision in South Africa. By the end of this year, apartheid must be dead and buried. The peoples of South Africa do not deserve and the international community will not tolerate, the prolongation of apartheid policies, practices and structures beyond this year. Let us stay with the South Africans until the last mile is finally run. Let us again commit ourselves to helping South Africans to achieve their common quest for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

- - - - -